



Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

Sunday 24th May 2020, 10:30am, 6th Sunday after the Resurrection (Easter 7)

Prepared by Rev'd Phillip Dixon

This written worship has been prepared for you to use as we gather in separate places, united together in love for our Lord Jesus Christ and one another. The knowledge that we are sharing in this worship in our own homes is an encouragement to us and at a time of physical separation brings us together spiritually.



Thursday 21st was Ascension Day and we wait with expectancy and longing for the celebration of Pentecost next Sunday:

Good morning church!

Opening Scripture: When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Amen. Luke:24 50-53 NIVUK

Opening Prayer: Loving and gracious God we thank You for this day. This is the day You have made and we give thanks for it. At a time when we cannot be together physically, we are encouraged and strengthened by knowing we are a people of "one accord" in our love, trust, faith and devotion of You. As we gather together in our own homes this morning to worship You, we pray for Your presence with us and Your abundant and generous blessing upon us. We pray that all we do in our praise of You glorifies Your Holy name. We pray in the name of our precious Saviour and Lord, Jesus. **Amen.**

Song: Every Praise

Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dHjgFilSLk>

Every praise is to our God.
Every word of worship with one accord
Every praise every praise is to our God.
Sing hallelujah to our God
Glory hallelujah is due our God
Every praise every praise is to our God.
(Repeats)

God my Saviour

God my Healer

God my Deliverer

Yes He is, yes He is. (Repeats)

Songwriters: Hezekiah Walker / John David Bratton

Song: We sing the praise of Jesus StF315.

Sing/read /pray/proclaim.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ay3rb2Eg_U (Morning Glory -popularly known as Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus, note: if using the link there is an introduction).

We sing the praise of Jesus,
of our ascending Lord,
the triumph of our Saviour,

Of Christ the Son of God.
The forty days are over
earth sees his face no more;
but Christ the King of glory
we worship and adore.

Rejoicing in Christ's promise
we wait in prayer and praise,
the Spirit sent from heaven
to set the earth ablaze;
we pray with expectation,
we praise with one accord,
we wait for living fire,
the power of the Lord.

Therefore with saints and angels
and all the hosts above
we lift our hearts and voices
to bless the God of love;
to sing of our Redeemer
who intercedes and prays,
that God the Holy Spirit
may guide us all our days.

With songs of alleluia
let earth and heaven ring;
and praises to the Father
let all creation sing.
All honour be to Jesus,
God's own eternal Son;
and to the Holy Spirit
let endless praise be done!

Norman Wallwork (b 1946)

Prayer of confession:

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in Him and receive eternal life. 1 Timothy 1:15,16

Lord, as I worship you today, I recognise my weakness and fragility. Help me to see in a fresh way today Your calling in my life.

Open the eyes of my heart to what is possible when I give over all of my life to You. When I cease to rely on my own strength. I am sorry for the times when I have not come to You first in times of trouble. For the times when I have spoken of another believer in ways that are demeaning or unkind. For times when I have not been an encouragement to others but instead used negative words.

Pause

Lord Jesus, I name the specific things for which I come now, in humility and sorrow, repenting of and asking Your forgiveness...

A time of silence to hear what the Lord may be saying to us.

God of love and power, thank You for Your forgiveness from my sins, strengthen me I pray, by Your Holy Spirit, that I may walk, this and every coming day, the path of righteousness and holiness with You. My past life of sin is behind me and Your cross ever before me. I am forever Yours, a redeemed child of light, bought with Your sacrifice and blood on a cruel yet now empty cross, I am dead to sin and fully and gloriously alive in You. **Amen.**

O God our Father, You sent Your Son to be my Saviour: renew in me day by day the power of Your Holy Spirit; that with knowledge and zeal, with courage and love, with gratitude and hope, I may strive powerfully in Your service: keep my vision clear, my aspiration high, my purpose firm and my sympathy wide; that I may live as a faithful soldier and servant of my Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen** Based on the prayer of William Temple (1881-1944). Archbishop of Canterbury.

Reading: Acts of the Apostles 11:19-26

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. New King James Version (NKJV)

A time to pause, read again, pray, and reflect.

Preaching notes:

Our theme for today's reading is The Growing Church. We may not see it at first sight, blink and you have missed it, but the event recalled in this reading is truly one of the greatest moments in the formation of the Christian Church. Those believers dispersed from Jerusalem into the surrounding areas have "been spreading the word (of the gospel) only among Jews". Separately, Philip had been

preaching in Samaria (Acts 8), evangelising the Ethiopian. Saul of Tarsus – once the worst persecutor of the church) has been converted (Acts 9) and Peter has preached and led Cornelius, his household and others to faith in Jesus and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10). But this is the first-time believers (men from Cyprus and Cyrene) have brought the good news of Jesus to non-Jews in such a deliberate, widespread and fruitful way.

Notice that this is not the result of "a well-researched and cleverly communicated growth plan", there is no "mission statement" or "strategy document", instead we learn that "the Lord's hand was with them". These men (because we do not know their names) have not been on a course to learn special techniques, they are people like you and me. What does set them apart and makes them effective disciple-makers is that they are living the genuine and true, Christian life as followers of Christ and are full of God's Holy Spirit.

We learn that when news of what has occurred in Antioch reaches Jerusalem, Barnabas is despatched. We gain no sense that he was there to organise or to investigate or even to report back, but instead to encourage and join with the work. Barnabas is described as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith", just one sentence but a description I would gladly receive if it were proffered, what about you?

When Barnabas first arrives at Antioch he encourages them all **"to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts"**. I wonder when was the last time you as a believer heard such encouragement? Have we

forsaken our love of God, our passion to be witnesses to Jesus, our clear instruction to make disciples of all in all nations, baptising and to be great encouragers, for something that is far less even than a shadow of what it should be.

Considering this question on what some call Aldersgate Sunday is wholly appropriate, John Wesley believed completely in the transforming power of the gospel. Aldersgate is the place where Wesley had gone to attend a Bible study and that very evening received the Holy Spirit into his life, he described the event as: “my heart was strangely warmed”. He believed passionately in new birth (John 3:7) and the regeneration of a sinful life by and through the Holy Spirit and for the church to return to its true intention to make disciples and spread the gospel. Wesley spoke of the need to make disciples rather than buildings and his words about the Methodist movement apply to us just as much today if not more than they did in the 18th Century: *“I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out”*.

Having titled our theme: “The Growing Church” we could also sub-title it: “Faithful Partners”. Barnabas recognises that this work at Antioch requires additional labourers, perhaps requires some gifts that he feels he does not possess so he goes in search of Saul (Paul) and together, for a whole year, they

minister and teach this growing church. This time together forges them into a partnership that takes them to Seleucia, Cyprus, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Acts chapter 13 and 14).

In the concluding verse of our passage we learn that it was in this Greek city of Antioch that the believers were first called Christians – remember that up to this point the believers have been predominantly Jews, closely linked to Jews (Samaritans) or proselytes (converts). Read Acts 15: 5 and you will see that this was still very much a Jewish movement, Pharisees were still debating with the believers (the Jerusalem church) about the requirement of circumcision. The name “Christian” comes from the Greek *christianos* and means “little Christ”, so to be a Christian means to be someone who demonstrates and exemplifies the life of Christ.

In closing, I believe that a fresh filling of God’s Holy Spirit over all that we do is available for us. Holding fast to the teaching and example of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit is more important than our own plans, schemes or programmes. Everything that was achieved at Antioch was by the grace of God, the Lord’s hand and the power of His Holy Spirit, ordinary men and women (just like us) serving obediently and reverently a truly extraordinary God. **Amen.**

We pray:

Lord, help me to be a willing servant. Fill me afresh with Your Holy Spirit, give me the grace and humility to work with partners like Barnabas and Paul. I pray that I will not be driven by processes or be “just going through the motions” but that

I will remain true to You with all of my heart and all of my life. Guide me in all that I do. **Amen.**

Thy Kingdom Come is a worldwide prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost. Since its launch by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 2016, Christians from 172 countries and 65 denominations have taken part in praying for friends and family to come to a living faith in Jesus Christ. The Methodist Church in Britain has been a key ecumenical partner in Thy Kingdom Come since 2017.

The days between Ascension and Pentecost have always been full of expectation and anticipation. As the Lord Jesus ascended, He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable the disciples to be witnesses. As a follower of Jesus, a Christian (a little Christ) what you do, how you live and what and who you pray for matters. I encourage you to engage with the on-line material (if you can) www.thykingdomcome.global there you will find testimonies and encouragement. For those not on the internet I have a limited number of "Prayer Journals", I can put one through your letter box if you let me know.

We are all encouraged to name 5 people who we, as believers and disciples, will pray for during these coming days, to come to a knowledge and acceptance of faith. We pray for breakthrough and seek opportunities to share with them

Watch and sing along with the Thy Kingdom Come song by Pete James. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3b06J8amBQ&feature=emb_logo

We pray together our Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Song: Cornerstone

Sing/read /pray /proclaim the words
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3HH-1Zbs>

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly trust is Jesus' name

Christ alone, Cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord
Lord of all

When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil
My anchor holds within the veil

Christ alone, Cornerstone...

When He shall come with trumpet sound
Oh, may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone
Faultless, I stand before the throne.

Christ alone, Cornerstone...

Songwriters: Eric Liljero / Jonas Myrin / Reuben Morgan / Edward Mote / William Batchelder Bradbury.

We pray: Loving and compassionate Lord we pray for our world, a world You created perfect and beautiful. We pray for people everywhere who do not have enough to eat, who do not have access to clean water or medical care. We pray protection for those who live in fear, either through conflict between nations or tribe or through domestic abuse and violence.

We pray for the bereaved, we pray especially for Brian in his time of mourning for Mary made the more painful by the enforced separation of dear friends and family. For Mary, her pain is over and she is now with You Lord Jesus, it has been our privilege to have known her in this life. For the family of Ravi Zacharias, a great contender of the faith, now promoted to glory, we pray for peace, comfort and blessing in their time of mourning.

We pray for those who are anxious in these times of the easing of restrictions, Lord give wisdom to our leaders to make the right decisions and our scientists in their work, may they approach You and seek Your leading and blessing.

Lord, place Your loving arms around the lonely and bring them peace and consolation.

We bring those individuals and situations we are praying for... **Amen**

Hymn: H&P 706 Where shall my wondering soul begin?

The Wesley's Conversion Hymn May 1738
Sing/read /pray /proclaim the words.

Where shall my wondering soul begin?
How shall I all to heaven aspire?
A slave redeemed from death and sin,
a brand plucked from eternal fire,

how shall I equal triumphs raise,
or sing my great deliverer's praise?

O how shall I the goodness tell,
Father, which thou to me hast showed?
That I, a child of wrath and hell,
I should be called a child of God!
Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,
blest with this antepast of heaven!

And shall I slight my Father's love,
or basely fear his gifts to own?
Unmindful of his favours prove,
shall I, the hallowed cross to shun,
refuse his righteousness to impart,
by hiding it within my heart?

Outcasts of men, to you I call,
harlots, and publicans, and thieves;
he spreads his arms to embrace you all,
sinners alone his grace receive.
No need of Him the righteous have;
he came the lost to seek and save.

Come, O my guilty brethren, come,
groaning beneath your load of sin;
his bleeding heart shall make you room,
his open side shall take you in.
He calls you now, invites you home:
Come, O my guilty brethren, come.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3w_w6XHSg (a poor quality recording of a beautiful rendition of this hymn)

Blessing:

May the God of hope fill you today with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen

Until we meet again, God bless. Phillip
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phillip.dixon@methodist.org.uk YouTube links are external resources and are provided to help you engage with the songs. Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms resources are provided under license: CCLI 178182
